

Personal notes from the Paul Belasik Clinic at Carnwrath, 5th October, 2013

(Note – italics are my own thoughts/comments at the time)

Black Welsh Section D

Bit like a Freisian in terms of neck carriage, hard to get the rear end 'connected'.

Recent translation of Grisone – the horse's back must be like iron. Bend back, ratchet up then get true lightness. Uses example of 2 poles across static frames = act like fulcrums. One of the best exercises to make the back firm – trot and stop. Nuno oliveira – worked horses in walk, use of spur, made the walk really work. PB – prefers to use trot as there is more activity. *Interesting discussion as when I saw this horse I thought I would try to make the back legs work a little more using lateral work.* Use of the leg yield to exercise the back legs, check movement. Completely normal for a horse to lack dexterity to one side – ie left/right handed.

Sitting trot – halt – trot

Use thigh, brace back, close hand to stop. When the hock is burried in the tail the back legs are not engaged. Interesting that when the horse placed his back legs further under him, he would shoot backwards to get the weight off the back legs. What we are looking for is the lift of the back. In the halt, ask the horse to hold the balance. Teach canter – walk to get a soft back and get hind quarters to swing up into walk.

Canter, swing back (rider) and then walk. Teach horse to follow rider's back. Don't break the push and don't whiplash the back. Rider use back to get more swing in back end.

Soft strike off, round the canter (swing hind legs up more) and walk – a simple but lovely exercise.

Finish with nice flowing rising trot.

Too much walk, confuse and mask real problem

Bay TB or WB? Ex-jumper, brood mare.

When you work long and low – can use it to get horse to follow the rider's weight aids. Need to teach the horse to know the difference between being asked to follow the bit and when not to follow the bit. So whe you work long and low, take your body forward and reach down. Then when you bring the rider's weight back, the horse knows its self-carriage being asked for. Play with reins a little – take and release – ask horse to seek the rider's hand. Don't be afraid to take a 'feel', and take weight really down. Then take reins shorter and bring base of neck up. This is working on the withers. Keep feel on the bit, don't be afraid to hold the bit – keep the contact, hold a few seconds and then release – ie analogy of kid holding sides of trousers and pulling hard and then letting go so hands feel as if they are flying up. Concept of 'passive hand' – you block but don't pull. Close hand and thigh and ask horse to stay on the bit. Once you establish the rein contact, don't give it up – imagine rein is attached to your back. If horse pulls/resists then block – the horse needs to sort it out.

A real difference could be seen with this horse when this advice was followed in canter – don't let go of the reins – hold the reins – use the back to hold, push up to the hand.

Working trot sitting – canter – try not to tip back in canter, keep the rhythm 1, 2, 3. Push to compress the horse. When making the transition to trot – hold with seat (knees to ribs), passive hand and push into the bridle. **'Hold the reins and attach them to your back' (hands still and together – ie above withers)**. Bring horse in in canter – push into it.

Pick head up – lift hands a little.

Walk/trot transitions on bit – to make horse really 'through'. Always try to bring horse 'up' (not 'down) in walk.

Interesting that PB says don't do too much long and low work until you have fixed 'on the bit' issues.
Don't let horse pull through shoulders.

Bay Iberian – young stallion

Don't let him challenge your hand – push him through. Use of leg yield to start the work. Nice big steps, concentrating on getting the correct bend. Work on suspension – hold on to the power in the rein a little and push – exaggerate the cadence.

Don't get into the habit of throwing the reins away – you undo the work – just have to keep pushing the horse to the bit. **Frame** the horse – keep him on the bit and then **forward**. Set the boundary and be strict with it. Older horses last forever if you don't push them to big stretches (ie extended gaits) – collection on the other hand is great for them.

Grey Iberian

Main question – keep the rhythm and ensuring he doesn't hollow. Rider – need to be rigid in body - open thighs, tummy trot, - all kill this rigidity and dampens the power. You can gain a lot of amplitude from trot just by using the body. Don't crumple – it kills the trot.

Problems come when you pick up the reins – when you have to make the **connection**. The horse will fight your position – you have to learn how to resist the resistance.

Teach the flying change from the rider's hips. Use the hips to teach the horse canter strike off – ie don't use outside/inside legs. Means that flying changes can then be achieved without using the leg (often likely to cause swinging quarters).

Big Black Gelding

Make sure you can feel your hamstring down the back of your leg every time you rise. Heel – kick out in karate – lead with your heel. Don't give anything in the waist.

Put reins on your hips and then move horse around to demonstrate you do not need reins to steer.

Ideas of space between tummy and hands – metaphor – think of a pillow you inflate and squash.

Don't ride with more seat and leg than you can control with your leg and seat and vice versa (*Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety*).

There is no following in riding – you lead.

Don't lean back – stay vertical in sitting trot. Analogy of hitting nail in wood – any kink and the nail will not go in the wood - it will pop at the side.

When rider bounces in the saddle, weight/energy is dissipated along the posture of the leg – thigh and calf. Sitting trot to walk – dampen action by closing thigh. Work towards getting horse to work off your seat rather than lower leg.

When foot does not swing back and forwards but bounces up and down – you know its going right.

Use thigh and abs to bring trot down to walk.

Keep leg long in sitting trot – the straight body line, Learn to sit and hold the position – even if you bounce and there is concussion. Don't let the horse 'float' in trot – make him work.

Think about using biceps to hold arm firm – not give to horse at every stride. Don't let your arm go out in front of you, as soon as you give the shoulders – you are lost. Push with your hips.

Deep legs, soft hands, firm upper arms, straight body and leg – no swinging pulse in foot/leg.

Without stirrups – lift toe up rather than heel down – till calf burns – gets rid of shaky ankle.

Dark Bay Mare

Remember if you pick up reins to ask horse to pick up – also ensure there is a **little** give in the action – ie a **little** bit forward.

Don't lean back in trot – use passive hand if horse challenges the contact/hand. Don't just push with pelvis. (sliding door example – stand at edge of sliding door and put head, chest and hips against edge – much easier to push if use all 3 points together – keep them in a vertical line).

Work without stirrups – always pull toe up. Think of canter like rocking a swing – push through. More flexion in poll – bring reins towards you. 'Press through' into the canter, use body, step a little into the right stirrup (right canter) and canter. Hands up. Push, push. If need to give the rein then give up and out, never down and out.

Little grey

A good teacher needs to have a good balance of theory and practice of riding – when they can ride then they will understand how all the parts fit together.

Use 2-point in trot to develop balance and strength and then back to sitting trot.

Sitting trot – not like sitting on a chair – standing through your legs a bit – not really standing up but inside of legs leaning into the horse.

Example of contact by holding one end of rein and if it is loose you cannot feel whether the it is being raised or lowered. Stop the horse by stopping working your seat (ie in sitting trot).